



Emergency Management **UPDATE**

May 2001

Teams/roles change in a terrorist event

By George Foresman, VDEM
Deputy State Coordinator

Despite the enormity of the Oklahoma City and World Trade Center bombings and tragic school shooting incidents, our nation has never suffered the full, comprehensive impact of a catastrophic terrorist attack.

None of these incidents represent a worst-case scenario in which a terrorist act inflicts mass casualties.

In Virginia, we are building our capacity to deal with a full range of disasters — including terrorism — in a standardized, systematic fashion.

The Joint Operations Center (JOC), Disaster Field Office (DFO) or state or local Emergency Operations Center (EOC) would be at the core of the activities marshalling resources local officials need at the incident site.

Although we will use a unified command system,

we must recognize the potential for conflict and contradictions in the federal, state and local interface.

We lack an overall national strategy to guide the full range of preparedness efforts at all three levels.

With a terrorist-type incident you may see the following:

- ▼ A much greater Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) presence because terrorist attacks threaten national security, and investigators must secure the scene for a criminal investigation. The incident commander for the federal element of the response may well be from the FBI.
- ▼ An expanded presence of federal officials from FEMA as well as lead state agencies including State Police and VDEM.
- ▼ The JOC located near the incident site to serve as the focal point for the FBI criminal investigation.



Terrorist act or revenge for Waco? With the Oklahoma City bombing and other large-scale events, intent does little to alter response and consequence management activities for emergency managers. (FEMA News Photo).

- ▼ Local representatives in both crisis and consequence management with a greater liaison role. The JOC will have the crisis management/law enforcement function. FEMA may establish a DFO for federal consequence management support.
- ▼ A Joint Information Center (JIC) linked to the JOC and DFO to coordinate dissemination of vital information to the public and to protect against release of information that would compromise the investigation.

At the state level, we want to ensure that available federal resources don't burden local responders even though the FBI may have the lead role in the federal portion of incident command because of their special responsibilities.

While the FBI and FEMA may share responsibilities for coordinating federal activities, it will not occur at the exclusion of state and local officials. In fact, state and local officials have operational and legal responsibilities that cannot, and should not, be deferred to federal authorities.

Consequently, the rapid development of a unified command in the early stages of an event will provide a solid foundation for addressing potential conflicts.

To improve state preparedness, we held three focus groups in Williamsburg recently to gather input from local emergency management, law enforcement and responder officials. We have learned a lot about what we need to do and

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Tornado drills now mandatory in Va. schools

Gov. Jim Gilmore has approved legislation mandating that public schools conduct annual drills to train school children on proper tornado preparedness procedures.

An amended version of this measure was approved during the veto session of the Virginia General Assembly. The new law also requires state colleges and universities to make adequate preparations for their facilities.

More information on this mandate is available on our Web site at www.vdem.state.va.us/emupdate.

Fairfax readies for school violence

By Bob Lambert, Staff Writer

Violence in schools, resulting in a lengthening list of fatal victims, has been on the rise in this country.

Many communities have implemented special assessment programs for school administrators faced with the prospect of students victimized as they attend class.

Fairfax County is among those localities that have worked hard to make sure school officials are ready to deal with violent incidents, conducting crisis management exercises with all of the 26 high schools in the county.

"We've had a couple of 'maybe' incidents in our county," says Alex Craige, deputy coordinator. "I think all of this training stems from all the incidents around the country, not just the one high profile one in Colorado. It's a preventive measure to train all of these high schools — not a reactive one.

"The tabletop exercises were individually created for each high school so the administrative staff can best assess their crisis management plan."

Exercise participants include the principal, assistant principals, safety and



security director, school resource officer, building engineer, school transportation director and personnel from any special programs or sub-schools included in the school.

"Since the pilot of this program last school year, we have invited 'feeder' elementary and middle schools to observe the exercise," Craige says. "We want them to take the lessons learned back to their school and evaluate their own plans."

The sessions have given the county emergency management staff a chance to know the high schools and their staffs better since the county uses the facilities as shelter sites during disasters.

Advance preparation and rehearsal can make a tremendous difference in a real-life event. Participating in the development and evolution of their crisis plans helps them better understand how their schools will deal with a crisis.

"Take the time to review the crisis management plans of your schools — you can't tell them what to do, but you can lead or make recommendations," Craige advises.

Contact Alex Craige at Alex.Craige@co.fairfax.va.us to learn more. Visit our Web site at www.vdem.state.va.us/emupdate for an expanded version of this story.

School safety in the cards for Lexington

For Lexington classroom teachers, handling a school emergency crisis is in the cards. As part of the city's school crisis response program, teachers keep a set of green, yellow and red four-by-six-inch cards to use in a school lockdown.

During an incident, each teacher simply slides the appropriate colored card under the door, which is locked to keep intruders out.

"We got the idea from a Florida SWAT team member," says Lexington Emergency Services Coordinator Steve Crowder.

"It's like a traffic light at an intersection. A green card under the door means everything is okay. A yellow card means something isn't right and you should check further and a red card means there's an emergency inside."

The system enables law enforcement authorities called to a school crisis scene to sweep the structure in a matter of minutes rather than hours, Crowder says. "It makes it very simple for a tactical team," he says.

For further information contact Steve Crowder at (540) 462-3751.



Green light for school safety. Lexington Emergency Services Coordinator Steve Crowder is stacking the deck against school violence in his community.

In the Spotlight



VDEM salutes **Ronald A. Nervitt**, chairman of the James City County Board of Supervisors, who was one of 28 community leaders recognized nationally for outstanding efforts and contributions to disaster resistance and prevention.

Nervitt received the *Build Disaster Resistant Communities Leadership Award* from FEMA and the National Association of Counties in March.

The award recognized Mr. Nervitt's leadership and commitment to the citizens of James City County in both the 1998 ice storm and 1999's Hurricane Floyd.



All for one. (Left to right) James City County team members Wilton Bobo, Jane Leonard, Ronnie Nowak, Chief Richard Miller, Nervitt and Jody Puckett share the award.



Wendy Shepherd has received the Addison E. Slayton, Jr., Scholarship, which she is using to continue her degree studies in emergency management administration at Mary Washington College.

Shepherd is deputy emergency services coordinator for King George County and a 10-year volunteer member of the Dahlgren rescue squad.

She holds an associate degree in emergency medical services technology from Northern Virginia Community College. (Shepherd is one of three scholarship recipients recognized at the 2001 VEM Conference and was inadvertently omitted in last month's issue.)

Winter storm turns I-64 into a 'war zone'

By S.E. Warwick, Public Information Coordinator
Goochland Fire-Rescue Department

As thick, wet snow began to blanket the road, just after 10 a.m. on Feb. 22, 2001, Goochland County fire-rescue volunteers were dispatched to a multi-car pile-up on Interstate 64.

They expected to find the usual aftermath when roads suddenly become skating rinks — a lot of fender benders and minor injuries. What they found reminded many of a war zone with dazed people and abandoned and burning vehicles.

Hours later, the body of a man trapped in his vehicle was extricated from the wreckage of his pickup truck in the center of the tangle of cars and trucks.

Fire-rescue volunteers from Centerville, Goochland Court-house and Crozier responded to the wreck near mile marker 171 of westbound I-64.

Sixteen cars and five tractor-trailers, whose cargos included frozen food, tires, electric transformers and large-screen TVs, piled up in a 200-foot-long stretch of highway. Fire spread quickly. "The wreck was so large you couldn't see from one end to the other," says Virginia State Police Sergeant Tom Snead, a veteran of 28 years.

Wayne Allen, assistant chief and incident commander, drove as far as he could on the shoulder, "avoiding vehicles that were every which way and ran the rest of the way to the smoke."

Centerville Emergency Medical Technician Carey Berkle, who was in charge of the Emergency Medical Service teams, said his group performed a quick triage. At least eight victims were taken to area hospitals.

More than 50 fire-rescue volunteers responded to the incident on I-64, spending most of the day containing the fire and helping State Police reconstruct the accident.

Goochland was well prepared, Virginia State Police Lieutenant Don Fields remarked later. "They had all the necessary resources and made the right responses," he says.

State SAR program lauded

The state's 400 Search and Rescue (SAR) volunteers have received recognition from the Virginia Emergency Management Association for "excellence and dedication to the emergency management profession in the Commonwealth of Virginia."

The state program received the 2001 Clarence P. "Pete" Rea Jr. Group Achievement Award in March during the Virginia Emergency Management Conference held in Williamsburg.

State search and rescue operations are 99 percent volunteer. In all, 16 teams are ready to respond to search and rescue operations throughout the Commonwealth.

According to state Search and Rescue Coordinator Winnie Pennington, a total of 208 SAR incidents, including missing or downed aircraft, emergency locator transmitter activations, missing persons and cadaver searches, were reported last year.

"The hundreds of dedicated SAR volunteers merit recognition for their tireless efforts to save lives throughout the Commonwealth," VDEM State Coordinator Michael Cline says.



Fighting the elements. Prompt response, teamwork by state, regional and local emergency responders, and the efforts of dozens of volunteers and accident victims helped contain the impact of this 21-vehicle crash on Interstate 64 during a sudden snow storm (Photo by Steve De Lisi).

Teamwork key in I-64 crash response

Greg Britt, hazmat response branch manager, and Steve De Lisi, central region hazmat officer, responded to the 21-vehicle chain collision in Goochland County due to a possible hazardous material threat.

Normally, hazmat officers get a clear indication of what's involved in an incident but, due to the remoteness of the scene and conflicting reports, Britt and De Lisi weren't sure of what they faced in this accident.

"There were a lot of unknowns involved," Britt says. "The initial information was confusing. We were ready to offer whatever assistance we could."

When the two arrived, they found a massive traffic accident, but no major hazmat consequences. The cooperation between law enforcement responding to a traffic accident and the volunteer firefighters who "came early and stayed past midnight" was outstanding, Britt says.

Read the full text account of the response to this incident on our Web site at www.vdem.state.va.us/emupdate.

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In Memoriam



Capt. Jeffery T. Messinger, 44, of the Suffolk Department of Fire and Rescue, died at his home on April 6 following a battle with cancer.

A 26-year veteran, he joined the department in 1975 as a firefighter and rose to the rank of captain in the emergency management division before retiring on Feb. 1.

Messinger is credited with implementing a full-time emergency management division in his city and creating their local disaster recovery task force, recognized as the largest in the state.

Training Calendar

Emergency Management

Disaster Response & Recovery Operations

May 8-10/Newport News

Coordinator's Briefing

May 17/Abingdon

Emergency Planning Workshop

May 22-24/Virginia Beach

Mass Fatalities Incident Mgmt.

June 5-7/Fairfax

EOC Management & Operations

June 26-28/Newport News

Principles of Emergency Mgmt.

July 10-12/Roanoke

Reservist Training

Lessons Learned Workshop

May 8/Richmond

Media Awareness/Asking for Help

May 10 & June 5/Richmond

Action Tracking System Training

May 10/Richmond

Reservist Program Seminar

May 16/Roanoke

VEOC Tabletop Exercise

June 5/Richmond

Search and Rescue

Incident Commander for Ground

June 1-3/Charlottesville

Technological Hazards

Hazmat Planning & Mgmt.

May 22-24/National Airport

Public Safety Response to Terrorism — Awareness

June 16/Roanoke

June 23-24/Pittsylvania County

Terrorism (continued from page 1)

what training efforts are needed for Virginia to address our potential shortcomings.

In looking at these possibilities, we also need better planning on the national level to deal with major disasters, whether they are natural, man-made, or the consequence of some terrorist group.

To more effectively deal with these incidents, we will rely on the existing system, processes and procedures as much as possible in balance with the federal government's expanded role due to major political and societal implications.

The better we are prepared, the better we can deal with a terrorist threat. The public depends on government to focus, organize and coordinate the response. In our planning for such incidents, officials at all levels must remain flexible and adaptable in the face of extraordinary circumstances.

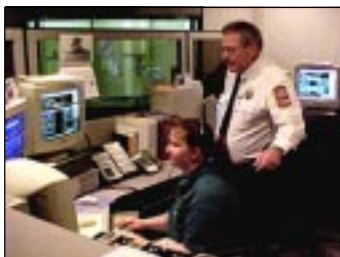
VDEM has developed three courses to train first responders to perform their jobs safely, efficiently and effectively in a terrorist incident. So far, about 7,000 police, fire, emergency medical services and other public safety personnel have received this training. Upcoming courses are listed in the training calendar at left. For more information, contact Pat Collins at (804) 897-6500, ext. 6568, or by e-mail at pcollins@vdem.state.va.us or visit our Web site at www.vdem.state.va.us/library/terrorismcourses.htm.

Miller helps citizens help themselves

After nearly four decades of responses, Winchester Emergency Services Coordinator Lynn Miller believes individuals are the first line of defense in preventing or mitigating disaster.

In this month's profile in emergency management, Miller says the government can't fix everything, but should help where individuals are unable to do so.

Visit our Web site at www.vdem.state.va.us/emupdate to learn more about his seasoned approach to emergency management.



Courtesy Photo

This month in Virginia storm history

For those who think tornadoes don't occur in mountainous areas, May 2, 1929, offers a cautionary tale.

On that date, a cold front from the west triggered the first in a series of five deadly tornadoes in southwest Virginia.

In all 22 people died and some 150 were injured as the twisters swept through Scott, Rappahannock, Bath, Alleghany, Loudoun, Culpeper and Fauquier counties and on into Maryland. Four schools were destroyed. Luckily, two of them were empty due to the late hour.



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